



GRAPEVINE

The Services Region Flight Safety Bulletin - May 2002

Tool Problems

A Discus pilot was thrashing up and down a ridge when he heard a suspicious 'clunk' from the rear of the glider. After a couple of gentle pushovers reproduced the noise, the pilot wisely elected to glide gently back to the airfield where the problem could be investigated. After an extensive search, a tailplane removal tool was found lodged under the elevator drive bell-crank in the fin - the tool had been lost some months previously and replaced with a new item. At another site, a Janus pilot felt a restriction during his pre-flight checks and after insisting on checking out the problem, a tailplane removal tool was found alongside a control run under the rear seat. More recently, another tailplane removal tool was found under another Discus seat.

There's a bit of a theme developing here. The pilot who reported the latest incident has suggested that the tailplane removal tool should be fitted with a flag to reduce the risk of it disappearing beyond the cockpit. Whatever, but it's never a good idea to replace something that has gone missing from a cockpit without first ensuring that the item hasn't become a potentially fatal loose article.

Finger Trouble

A very experienced pilot was doing the usual thing of pulling on the front cockpit rim of his ASW20 to get the glider on line for a launch. Inexplicably, the canopy, which is normally fully supported by a gas strut, slammed closed and the canopy frame edge sliced off the top third of a finger.

Ouch. All sorts of gliders have forward hinging canopies, and most are supported by a gas strut. The only sure way of avoiding a canopy slamming closed is to support the canopy while moving the glider - as well as keeping an ongoing suspicious eye on the effectiveness of the gas strut.

Blown Over

A K8 was being towed back to the hangar because of deteriorating weather conditions - the 15 kt wind was gusting significantly. Without warning, the empty glider lifted off, tipped up vertically and then fell inverted, narrowly missing a member of the towing team who had been holding the tail up by the rear handle.

Getting breezy? Easy with hindsight, but K8's and their like really need a body in the cockpit to minimise the risk of a blow over.

Blown Back

A motor-glider was blown back approximately 150' with 3 cwt concrete blocks still tied to the wing tips. It came to rest after demolishing the rudder against the wing of another aircraft.

The owner now uses tie downs attached to 6 cwt of concrete buried into the ground.

Just Blown

As the wind had increased to 40 kts, the duty instructor decided to cease operations for the day. While the hangar was being stacked, an empty K13 was parked carefully in the lee of the hangar, completely sheltered from the wind. Unfortunately, the wind swung through 90 degrees and a 60 kt gust lifted the K13 off the ground causing it to land upside down on a fence.

Again with the benefit of hindsight, would it have been wiser to stick a couple of bodies in the cockpit until there was enough space to get the glider into the hanger?

Engine Runaway

Having applied full power from a glide approach during a tug training session, the trainee pilot then attempted to throttle back. The throttle failed to respond, and the engine continued to run at full power. The instructor in the rear cockpit took control, directed the trainee pilot to move the mixture to cut-off, turn off the fuel and to turn off the magneto (the rear cockpit was only equipped with a throttle). The aircraft was then landed uneventfully on the airfield from a glide circuit by the instructor.

The throttle cable had snapped, allowing a purpose designed spring to fail the throttle to full power. This instructor's actions prevented an incident becoming an accident, and prevented an RPM over-speed that could have easily damaged the engine.

Supervision & Training

Having flown a tight circuit with a steep, full airbrake approach, an inexperienced pilot on his second flight on type landed heavily. The glider was damaged, but happily the pilot was uninjured.

The wind at the time of the flight was 20 kts, gusting 25 kts. The site CFI pointed out that this accident was one of a string of similar occurrences at the site where inexperienced pilots had been caught out in marginal conditions and in unfamiliar gliders. He also pointed out that many pilots at the site were habitually flying tight, steep circuits rather than operating appropriately to the conditions of the day. His advice is to ensure that instructors are made aware of the need to properly supervise conversion flights (including an assessment of the weather conditions) and the need to encourage pilots to think about their circuit and approach flying. His club is attempting to combat the problems through a series of briefings and continuation training.

Wild Winch

A very experienced Skylaunch winch driver experienced a strop failure as the throttle reached full power at 'all out'. The cable whipped back and trashed the winch driver's car that was parked about 20' behind the winch.

Puch Problems?

During a winch launch, the canopy on a Puchacz flew open. The glider landed safely, but the canopy frame was badly damaged.

This isn't a first (or last!). The instructor pointed out that he didn't check the canopy after the P2 closed it, and the CFI pointed out that Puch canopy locks "vary in quality".

MIDAIR Number One of 2002!

During early April, K13 and a K21 flying opposing circuits onto the same landing area collided during the final turn. Both gliders landed safely with some minor damage.

Opposing or differing direction circuits onto the same landing area have been implicated in numerous near misses and quite a number of FATAL gliding accidents. You can tell pilots to look out until you're blue in the face, but in busy situations, for example the back end of a circuit just before landing, lookout will usually become less than effective as other perceived priorities develop.

To repeat, opposing or differing direction circuits onto the same landing area have been implicated in numerous near misses and quite a number of fatal gliding accidents.

Human Performance & Limitations

An experienced but low currency glider pilot set himself up in the circuit to land at his home airfield. During the final stage of the approach, the pilot realised that the wheel was still retracted, and attempted to change hands to lower the gear. The glider pitched down and struck the ground heavily in a nose down attitude. Fortunately, the pilot was uninjured. The pilot had recently suffered a stressful personal problem, had been suffering from a lack of sleep due to work and had been airborne for three hours.

Forgetting to lower the gear is a common mistake - the old expression "there are those that have and those that will" comes to mind. There have been quite a few instances of a last minute hand changing frenzy leading to a nasty crunch followed immediately by a visit to hospital, and very many more cases of pilots landing wheel up with no greater damage than a dented pride.

Flying while out of currency is bound to occur every now and again - you need to fly to get current - but all of us probably need to be just that bit more careful of the detail if we haven't flown for a while. But it's never a great idea to mix personal problems and tiredness with flying.

And maybe this a suitable time to remind ourselves why if we see a glider on finals with it's gear retracted, we should normally not attempt to warn the pilot using the radio.